





"Dred Scott," by Lesley Dill, 2021  
acrylic paint on cotton fabric, 100  
x 60 inches. (Courtesy Bates  
College Museum of Art)

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith.

work."

The suspended costumes are accompanied by drawings and banners. Only Black Hawk and Scott are not represented by figures, just drawings.

Dill's muse has long been Dickinson, whose poetry and person have been the source of her inspiration and the subject of much of her art over the years. What Dill realized a few years ago, however, is that she "didn't connect her poetry with the history of what was happening when she wrote it. Her poetry was a country of its own. But Dickinson was writing during the Civil War."

That realization led Dill to seek the historical narrative her subjects belong to and is the reason for the strong African-American, Native American and feminist strain that the show developed. White artists appropriating Black and Native American history can be a touchy subject, but Dill was urged to do so by Black artist Dread Scott (aka Scott Tyler) and Native American artist

"Thus, I reached out to the nation that Black Hawk is from because he wrote an autobiography," Dill said. "All the characters are linked by writings. Black Hawk is from the Sac & Fox Nation of Oklahoma. And I asked for permission to do an image of Black Hawk from Juaquin Hamilton Young-Bird, cultural historian."

Dill's art has taken the form of dresses and clothing for many years. She credits a pair of great-aunts for introducing her to the needle arts.

"They taught me how to weave at 11, giving me my first 'touch' of thread, which has remained magical to me to this day," she said, "and how to hook rugs, and how to carve a linoleum block for printmaking."

"Black Hawk," by Lesley Dill, 2021  
hand-cut paper and acrylic paint  
on cotton fabric, 100 x 60 inches.  
(Courtesy Bates College Museum  
of Art)

Despite the fact that Dill grew up in Maine, her only other Maine exhibition was a show at the Portland Museum of Art in 1999.

"I would love to be more visible in Maine and I'll tell you why," Dill told me several years ago.

"I grew up in Maine. That's the land I became a person of thoughtfulness in. I actually think that it's an under-recognized factor where an artist grows up. The geography, the culture, the background – all of the things that go unknowingly into an artist's being."

More recently, she said "Growing up with the austere beauty of Maine, I have a history of quietness. Part of me is total Maine."

*Edgar Allen Beem has written about art in Maine since 1978.*



"Wilderness: Light Sizzles Around Me," Jan. 28-March 26, Bates College Museum of Art, 75 Russell St., Lewiston, 207-786-6158, [bates.edu/museum/](https://www.bates.edu/museum/). The museum is currently only open to visitors with valid Bates IDs due to the emergence of the omicron variant; check the website for updates to visitor protocols.